



**Montana Technology  
Innovation Partnership**

## **Paving the Technology Path To Economic Development**

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THE MTIP MAILER

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Christine Bell  
MTIP Program Manager

### **A Preliminary Approach to Patent Searching**

MTIP frequently receives questions about how to perform a patent search. Traditionally, this was a task requiring a professional patent searcher who would dig through the records at a federal patent depository. However, with the patent database now available online, you can perform your own preliminary search. This effort doesn't replace that by a professional but can be very instrumental in making patentability decisions without incurring costs.

Following are steps for beginner patent search efforts:

1. Free access to a US Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) patent database can be had at [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov). Select "Search" under the Patents menu. To get started, select the Quick Search option under "Searching Full Text Patents (Since 1976)."
2. Keyword search: You will need to apply

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE MTIP TEAM:**

It is our pleasure to introduce the new MTIP Program Manager, Christine Bell. Since 2004, Christie has worked primarily in the Montana Department of Commerce Census and Economic Information Center. Her many responsibilities included information technology, web development, census data research/analysis, and program marketing and management.

Christie's familiarity with the people and systems at MDOC will permit her to ramp up quickly with the MTIP program. Please add her contact information (below) to your system and feel free to give a call if MTIP can be of assistance to you.

**WE WANT TO HELP  
YOU SUCCEED...**

ordinary online search skills in the process of identifying suitable keywords. Searching one or two simple words in "all fields" is going to pull up thousands of patents. You will want to experiment with different word combinations - ideally, selecting elements that will narrow the search to those patents bordering your invention. Using a novel prosthetic foot with spring-loaded energy return as an example:

- "foot" nets over 19,000 patents
- "prosthetic foot" nets 359 patents
- "prosthetic foot energy" nets 18 patents

After reviewing the patents yielded in the search, you can experiment with substitute terms to get into the patents most closely resembling your area of inventing. For example, "artificial foot" nets 243 patents which may not have used the word "prosthetic". As you develop more search skills, exhaust different combinations of the keywords for your invention to learn what will yield the most valuable results.

3. Classifications search: Every invention can be defined under one or more classification numbers. Performing a classification search can help you focus in more tightly on those patents most closely related to your own. The US Patent Classification Manual can be searched at:  
<http://www.uspto.gov/web/patents/classification>.

Start off by performing a key word search at this site to locate the range of classification codes that might relate to your invention. Or you can get a sense of direction by opening some of the patents located in your patent keyword search and reviewing the Class Codes displayed in the opening information. The 18 "prosthetic foot energy" patents show a range of Class Codes from 623/24 through 623/56. Searching on Class 623 reveals that it relates to artificial body members (prostheses) and the Subclass 53 is specific to a foot. Other subclassifications can help you hone in on prosthetics using energy return devices such

## IN MONTANA!

### MTIP CONTACT INFORMATION

Montana Department  
of Commerce  
301 South Park Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620-0505

Christie Bell: [cbell@mt.gov](mailto:cbell@mt.gov)  
Katie Cole: [kcole2@mt.gov](mailto:kcole2@mt.gov)

Email: [docmtip@mt.gov](mailto:docmtip@mt.gov)  
Phone: (406) 841-2750  
Fax: (406) 841-2728  
[www.mtip.mt.gov](http://www.mtip.mt.gov)

### IMPORTANT LINKS

#### [MTIP Request for Services](#)

Companies that have worked previously with MTIP may directly contact their counselor for services. Companies new to MTIP can complete and submit a Request for Services form at this link.

#### [SBDC Offices](#)

Montana's Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) comprise a statewide business-assistance network for entrepreneurs and existing business owners. Free business assistance, low-cost training, excellent resource on financing opportunities.

#### [MATR Newsletter](#)

Superb electronic newsletter for those engaged in the development and growth of tech-based businesses.

#### [SBIR/STTR Alerting Service](#)

Excellent electronic newsletter targeting SBIR/STTR applicants.

#### [SBIR Gateway](#)

Access to SBIR/STTR agency solicitations (past, present, and future) and an electronic newsletter for SBIR/STTR-

as fluid cushioning (623/56) or springs (623/52). However, those classifications may not be specific to the prosthetic foot.

Returning to the patent Quick Search page, you can insert "623/52" (indicating prosthetics with springs) in Term 1 and adjust the selected field to Current US Classification. Then, by inserting "foot" in Term 2 for "all fields," will yield a highly directed list of 108 patents directly related to a prosthetic foot with spring-loaded energy return. The insertion of additional key words can further refine the search.

Keep in mind that this is a very preliminary approach, and be cautious about overreacting to a patent that appears to be the same as your own concept. Read the claims section and embodiments carefully to understand where there might be overlap, or barriers to your invention. Also, don't forget that a separate search must be performed to view published patent applications (return to the search webpage for that option). This effort still will not give you full access to everything that has been filed and is pending - just that which has been subjected to publishing. Interpreting what you have found in the search can be a challenge. Therefore, consult with patent counsel to better understand how other patents impact your own invention.

*[Thanks to Sam Bixler, SBDC Officer in Colstrip, for requesting information about patent searching to serve his client's needs. Please let us know if you have any special requests for future MTIP MAILER editions.]*

## **SBDC Invest in Success Conference April 6 in Billings**

The Montana Small Business Development Center Network will be hosting the 2nd annual [Invest in Success Conference](#) on April 6, 2011 at the Crowne Plaza Billings Hotel. The conference is designed to help owners of growing large and small businesses of all industries, and offers a unique opportunity to obtain skills, knowledge and resources

The conference will provide essential business

related events nationwide.

### [Innovators Guide](#)

Addresses Key issues of confidentiality, invention records, patents and patenting, and resources for additional assistance.

### [Approved Montana Research Institutes](#)

Montana non-profit research centers qualified to serve as a Research Institute required in all STTR projects.

### [A Good Candidate Profile](#)

Attributes common to most successful SBIR/STTR companies.

resources of financing, manufacturing, government contracting, marketing and business management during breakout sessions throughout the day.

Enjoy keynote addresses from:

- Bruce Baker a retail market and merchandising expert
- Chris Andrew, a social media lead generation guru
- Steve LeFever, a small business financial management genius

The trade show will be open all day, so you will have the opportunity to visit the booths and meet with many different vendors.

## Random Thoughts

Recent economic studies have concluded that nearly all the net new job creation in the American economy comes not really so much from small companies but from young ones.  
(Lippper Current Weekly Feb 01, 2011)

### Open & Pending SBIR/STTR Solicitations

Agency/Program	Release	Proposals Due
<a href="#">EPA</a>	15 Mar 2011	3 May 2011
<a href="#">NSF SBIR</a>	7 Mar 2011	10 Jun 2011
<a href="#">DoD STTR 2011.A</a>	27 Jan 2011	30 Mar 2011
<a href="#">HHS/NIH SBIR/STTR (Grants) Non-AIDS Related Topics</a>	24 Jan 2011	5 Apr 2011 5 Aug 2011 5 Dec 2011
<a href="#">HHS/NIH SBIR/STTR (Grants) Non-AIDS Related Topics</a>	15 Jan 2011	7 May 2011 7 Sep 2011 7 Jan 2012
<a href="#">NIH SBIR/STTR</a>	The NIH frequently offers	

<a href="#">Special Funding</a>	<i>special SBIR/STTR grant opportunities outside their regular omnibus SBIR solicitation.</i>	
<a href="#">DoT (Transportation) SBIR</a>	4 April 2011	13 Jun 2011
<a href="#">DoD SBIR 2011.2</a>	26 Apr 2011	29 Jun 2011

**For a full listing of past, present and future solicitations visit:**  
<http://zyn.com/sbir/scomp.htm>



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[www.mtip.mt.gov](http://www.mtip.mt.gov)